HALPERN, SAM
Interview by Brian Latell, Michael Warner
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MW: This is the interview with Sam Halpern, done by Brian Latell and Michael Warner in the spaces of the Center for the Study of Intelligence on the 7th of April, 1998.

BL: Sam, you told me that you read recently the IG report on the Bay of Pigs.

SH: I did, and the responses....

BL: Which were recently declassified by the Agency, and you told me that you had never seen it before, and that had you seen it when you were running Operation Mongoose you would have learned some critical lessons. You said that it was a shame that you had not seen it.

SH: That's right. Neither did Bissell; I mean, neither did Harvey and neither did Ted Shackley. Harvey's dead so I couldn't ask him, but I asked Ted the other day whether he had ever seen the report, and he said no he had never seen it and nobody had ever talked to him about it. So here you have the man in charge of a new Cuban Bay of Pigs SIC Operation, although we weren't going to send in 1,000 troops. And you have the guy in charge of the whole thing, Bill Harvey, and of course the DDP himself, Dick Helms. Helms by that time....When we were doing Mongoose, none of the three people, none of the three senior people ever saw the damn thing. I think McCone was wrong not to let those three people, at least those three people, see the thing, because the sections dealing with the organization and management of the whole Bay of Pigs Operation had lessons for what we were doing in Mongoose, and we were running the same kind of operation in terms of trying to overthrow a foreign government.

BL: What, in particular, would you have done differently? What specifically, what lesson specifically applied to Mongoose?

SH: I think one of the biggest things was a Governmental structure and what and how it was done, and how it was done under Mongoose. Fortunately under Mongoose CIA was not the main target of the Government structure. We were part of a Government-wide operation, as opposed to the Bay of Pigs. The Bay of Pigs as I read the report was basically a CIA operation supported to some extent by the Defense Department and politically by the State Department. In Mongoose it was totally different in that directions - all directions - came from the White House, basically Bobby Kennedy, through the voice of a fellow called General Edward Landsdale. But in terms of the management of the thing, one of the best things that ever happened in Mongoose was that the three senior people who were involved in this, namely John A. McCone as DCI, Dean Rusk as Secretary of State, and Bob McNamara as Secretary of Defense, refused, flat out, to follow the original concept of Mongoose, which was that Ed Lansdale would be set up as Chief of Operations reporting to Bobby Kennedy, the Attorney General. All the other agencies of Government - the three I mentioned plus Commerce, Treasury, USIA, and God knows how many other pieces - would all have detailed men, money, and material to Lansdale, in effect creating a brand new agency. The three senior members of the cabinet that I mentioned, except for the Director, three senior members said "no, we can't do that. Congress appropriates the money to us and we're responsible for the money and the manpower and the material. We'll put our shoulders to the wheel, we'll follow all your orders, but only through command channels." That's what made Mongoose different than the Bay of Pigs. In the Bay of Pigs the CIA stood out like a sore thumb, and in Mongoose CIA was subdued in terms of just being part of a whole series of people that were involved. In terms of the organizational structure, and the management of the thing, I think that with Harvey, particularly, in charge, and with Helms as his boss as DDP, we avoided one problem automatically in there were two senior men who organized our part of Mongoose the way we in the Agency had always done in terms of headquarters and the field station. We regarded Miami, which was headed by Ted Shackley, as almost the equivalent of headquarters. It was JMWAVE. He had more people under his command than we had in the branch, or in the task force up in Washington. I think he ended up with about 600 staffers including commo and logistics and God knows what else.

BL: So you did solve that problem?

SH: We solved that problem.

BL: Because the IG report criticized the Bay of Pigs Operation because of the poor coordination/communication between Miami and Headquarters.

SH: We did it without knowing that. We set up our organization without knowing what way they had done it before. It was sheer luck. You had Harvey and you had Helms. Two old hands in the DDP business, and that's the way we set it up. But I think if we had known what the problem was in the Bay of Pigs operation I think we would have been helped a bit, in terms of at least watching out for that because there could have been a real problem if somebody had said it back here, "Hey you're doing it all wrong you know; you can't have a station in the United States." Well, in this case we didn't even ask anybody, and we didn't ask Landsdale, and we didn't the President, and we didn't ask Bobby, we just did it our way, and with the support of a guy called Larry Houston, CIA's General Counsel, who said, "Set it up any way you want to," in effect. "You guys are responsible and you are reporting to the President; go, and go with God." And we did. But I think we would have felt a lot more, at least I would have felt more comfortable, in knowing that we weren't going to face some of the problems that Jake Esterline had faced. One of the things we didn't have to worry about, and Jake did have to worry about, is this business of the air support. We weren't worrying about air support, because we weren't operating in Air Branch or anything like that. Jake's problem, for example - which Bissell thought he had solved by that memorandum that he wrote in October of 1960 where he set up the command relationship between DPD and Branch 4....It's fine on a piece of paper, but I asked Jake specifically "How'd it work?" He said it didn't. Those things just don't happen the way you write them on a piece of paper and dictate in a memorandum.

MW: Development Plans Division, DPD, acted as an independent entity and basically answered to the DDCI Cabell.

SH: Well, first they answered to a guy called Bissell. It was Bissell's private air force, and he ran it as his private air force. Fortunately we didn't have to worry about that one, but Jake did, and all the memorandums in the world didn't help any on that one. Listening to

Jake on that - in terms of trying to get air support - it was basically on a person-to-person basis. It's what you can wheedle out of somebody and get them to do it the right way instead of being able to command them and not having to spend your time massaging a guy's back. That's one of the key problems I thought, and also Jake's relationship, or Washington's relationship with Miami, was obviously, if you read the report, and even the rebuttal, I thought it was very confusing. Case officers did not know really who their boss was. Maybe they should have looked at who was writing their fitness reports, I suppose is one way, but it was too haphazard. We tried to organize it, again it was sheer luck. We tried to organize it, as I say, as if Miami was a foreign station and Ted had all the rights and privileges of a Chief of Station abroad. The fact that he was in the United States didn't bother us at all; we never thought of it that way. Largely because you've got a guy like Harvey in charge, who, despite the fact that he was a gruff SOB, had a heart of melted butter when it came to his own troops. He would never let anybody, at any level, blast at one of his troops without himself, in effect, taking out of his guns and shooting the SOB who did it.

I'll give you a perfect example of that. I was on a telephone call to J.C. King, and J.C. was chewing me out on the phone about something I wasn't even involved in, but anyway he chewed me out. I finished my conversation with him, if you want to call it that, hung up, and at that time Harvey buzzed me to come in and see him. So I came in and I must of had a hang-dog look on my face or something, and he looked up at me and he said, "What's the matter with you?" I said J.C. just chewed the ass out of me. He said, "For what?" I said, "Nothing, I wasn't even involved." He didn't ask any questions. He picked up the phone and dialed to J.C. Himself. Before I could say anything he started to read J.C. the riot act, in only his language, which makes paratroop language look like a church meeting. In effect he said, "Look, if there is anybody that's going to chew out my troops, I'm going to chew out my troops. Don't you ever do that again without checking with me first. If you've got trouble with some of my troops you talk to me and not to them." Moves his arm as if he is slamming down the receiver. I think J.C. must have lost his ear then. It was awful. Ok, you got a guy like Bill Harvey in charge - Jake couldn't do that. But Jake for example, Jake and Col. Jack Hawkins both resigned from the Bay of Pigs operation up in the Agency. Bissell took them to his house, on a Sunday morning, talks them into reneging and staying with the

Agency and staying with the operation. Both of them said "This isn't going to work, it's useless."

BL: This was exactly when Sam?

SH: About a week before the invasion, I don't even know the date but it happened on a Sunday.

BL: What was the precipitating issue that caused them to reach that?

SH: Air.

BL: The air strikes?

SH: Yes, the cut on the air support.

BL: The reduction of the air strike?

SH: Yes, the reduction. It was quite clear, Jake says, and I've also talked to Hawkins now. He's a great guy, I don't know if you've ever met him? He's 80 something at the moment and he's still sharp as a tack. Anyway, it was the lack of air and Bissell said, in effect, "If you guys quit I'll just appoint two other people in your place and we'll go on anyway so why don't you stay and see what you can do to help." So he talked them back into the Agency and they stayed. But the whole point was that they are convinced - and I am now absolutely - that Bissell never told the President what the troops, Hawkins and Esterline, were saying, and what their opinions were in all this stuff. He never did.

BL: What's your view, Sam, about why Bissell did not?

SH: I think he was so imbued with the operation that he thought, as many people have said now, that he thought that Kennedy could never let it die and he'd send the troops in, he'd send the Marines in if it came to that. Plus, I think Bissell really thought he had a deal going on an assassination plot of some kind. It makes no sense that all of these things wouldn't bother him - including not talking to the President again, in Rusk's

office on the telephone, that whole story - makes no sense, makes no sense at all without an assassination plot in the background. And the worst thing to me, and looking at that damn report again, why they didn't say, when the President and Rusk said "Trinidad looks too professional, find some other place."...At that point I would have just blown my stack. Bissell may not be the kind of person to blow his stack, but anyway I would have blown my stack. If you want a non-professional job, then go pick some people off the street and do a job. I mean, we're professionals. If you don't like what we are doing, fine; go get somebody else, but I would never have agreed to move from Trinidad to a place that has to have an airfield on it, that's going to take B-26's when everyone knows there is no such place on the bloody island. So they found a little spot of ground near the Bay of Pigs after spending four days looking at the maps. That's crazy. It makes no sense at all. And why Bissell went along with all this stuff. Again, from a purely management point of view and organizational point of view, Bissell never used Hawkins the way he should have as a staff officer for Christ's sakes. You take your staff officer to the meetings with you. You don't know the details - you are not the guy who knows military tactics or strategy, for God's sakes. Bissell may be great at U-2'S and SR-71's, and he may have been able to put all the ships in his head during the war, but you don't know military tactics and strategy.

MW: Hawkins was at those meetings. Hawkins came out here about a month ago - Lee Strickland [CIA Information and Privacy Coordinator] had him out. Hawkins said he was at the meetings but he wasn't allowed to talk. He said it was agony because he just sat there and watched Bissell mangle the military aspects and he was wondering why the Joint Chiefs, some of them who were there at the meetings, didn't speak up - why the Generals who were advising Secretary of Defense McNamara didn't speak up. He found out afterward from a classmate of his (because he was a Marine - and he had a classmate from some military class who was on the staff of General Shoup, the head of the Marine Corps) that McNamara wouldn't allow any of them to talk either. They were afraid; they were cowed, and they wouldn't speak up for fear they'd show up McNamara.

SH: It was worse than I thought it was. This is ridiculous. You don't run an operation that way.

BL: Sam, another kind of key point in the IG report is that the DO's Chief of Operations - Dick Helms, I guess - was not involved in the Bay of Pigs planning.

SH: That's right.

BL: The report, rather pointedly, complains that Helms should have taken the opportunity to become involved, but that, on at least one, perhaps more than one occasion, he did not. He seemed to prefer not being involved. Is this a lesson that you all took to heart with Mongoose, and was that criticism of Helms fair? Was it accurate?

SH: I think it was accurate from what I know, being somebody on the sidelines during the operation, since I was enjoying life in Tokyo at the time. When it all came through and Jake was knocking his ass off here, I know...But yes, I think Dick probably did the right thing, for a very simple reason. Somebody had to take care of the rest of the world, from a command point of view. If Bissell was spending his time on the Bay of Pigs, plus the U-2, plus SR-71, plus Corona, there isn't much time left for Bissell to worry about the rest of the world. Secondly, Helms knew his troops, the personnel more or less, in the Clandestine Service. He knew the good ones from the bad ones or the mediocre ones. That's one thing that I fault him on, in that he knew that the Division Chiefs' protective association, and the Staff Chiefs' protective association, were sending off to the Bay of Pigs operation, which they all knew about, obviously, but they were sending off their second-best, their has-beens, the guys who had stacked arms, and just kind of washing their hands of the whole thing. That's one thing, which is not in the report itself, but that's one thing that I knew, as just a case officer and having my own ears and fingers out in the wind. When we started on Mongoose, that's one thing I knew - at least I wasn't going to be involved in - is letting the Division Chiefs and the Staff Chiefs palm off on us all the cast-offs. I went to Des Fitzgerald, whom I knew very well, because I had been his Executive Officer, and I said to Des "You and the other Division and Staff Chiefs ought to be ashamed of yourselves in what you did." I said "I don't know the troops in the other Divisions and Staffs, but I do know something about the Far East Division Staffers, and you did the wrong thing. You didn't send the best troops you had. And I'm not saying you had to give them all your best troops," because there's another big world out there in addition to Cuba, there's still the

Soviet Union, there's still China, etc....When Bill Harvey came aboard I have him the same story and the same pitch, and I said "Bill, we're going to have to come up with better people and the way to do this is you go to Dan Debartele"- who was then the Clandestine Service Personnel Officer, the big wheel at "Career Manglement" as we called it in those days. I said "Get from Dan, at each appropriate GS level, GS 9's, 10's, 11's, 12's, and so on, right up the line, and get from him from each component of the CS, Staffs and Divisions, get from him the promotion list from each component, including those that made it and those that didn't quite make it but they're near the middle - are near the top - and they might make it the next time around. It's from those lists that we're going to pick our people. I think we can get anybody we want to but bearing in mind there's still a big world out there and the Soviet Union comes first, regardless of what the President says about Cuba." Harvey looked at me and listened, didn't say a bloody word, and I left. The next day when I came back into his office he was stacked high with personnel jackets which he had gotten from Dan in terms of what I had said. You go and get the top lists of who was recommended for what, and you pick from those. In addition to that, obviously Harvey knew he wanted Ted Shackley down in Miami. He was only a GS-14, I think, at the time he was sent down. I think he may have been a GS-13 for all I know. Ted knew some of the good people from the Eastern European Division, the old EE. That's how we built a different kind of a cadre than Jake was forced to take. He had some good people, there's no question about that, and that, shown in the DDP's rebuttal to the IG report are some of the senior officers they had, but they also had some guys who were not top notch. I don't have the list in front of me now, but I remember when I showed Dick Helms....From the beginning of the Mongoose nonsense, Dick Helms came over to take a look at what we had, and this was in December of 1961, when he suddenly found himself being told by McCone, the new DCI, that he, Helms, was now McCone's man on Cuba. That was told to him, by McCone, at a morning staff meeting up in the Director's office. At which, my boss, Goshen Zogby (we were still Branch 4 but it was Cuba and all the Caribbean Islands and Zog was there) our Branch Chief at a morning DCI staff meeting, was most unusual. But anyway, he was there and he told me the story about how Helms looked like a thunderbolt had hit him when McCone said, "By the way you're my man on Cuba." Just like that. Helms, who had stayed away from the Bay of Pigs (I'm still on your question) and he was right to do that, I think, because he wasn't going to get anywhere with Bissell in charge, he knew

that. Bissell was a one-man operator and Helms knew exactly what to expect from Tracy Barnes.

BL: But the complaint is that, I think, in the IG report, Kirkpatrick's complaint about Helms is that Helm's did not ring the alarm bells.

SH: He should have. Yes, I saw that, but I don't think you can blame Helms, because he did stay away from it so he didn't know what alarm bells to ring. Is it personnel? Is it your operational approach? Is it the air field? Is it the air support? Is it the troops on the ground? What is it you want him to ring alarm bells about? He didn't know. He had no idea. I'm not trying to defend him from that point of view; maybe he should have forced his way in, which would have meant a real confrontation with Bissell. And with Allen Dulles looking the other way, Helms might not have found himself in any position to argue with anybody - he might have been out. So I think you've got to give....I think Kirk, CIA Inspector General Lyman Kirkpatrick, was wrong in that particular aspect. Yes, the guy who's third in line should maybe say something to the guy who's second in line, but not when it's a closed corporation. I know people who argue both ways on this one, and I have too, but I think in the end you come down, saying that somebody had to watch the rest of the world, number one. And number two, no matter what Helms would have said to Bissell about the quality of the personnel....As I was about to say, when Helms came over to Quarters I, where we were in Branch 4 for Mongoose, and I showed him the roster of the people who had been on the Bay of Pigs, literally he went down the list saying, “hhhmmm, oh no, no, NO, hhmm, no it couldn't be.” I just didn't say a word. There were three people in the room, Zog and me (and Zog is dead unfortunately), and Helms. And he's going down the list of people, including those we have left, in Mongoose. Of course, why do we have them left - because nobody wanted them. Nobody wanted those extra people. And Helms said, “Is this what you have left to work with?” Zog said, “Yes sir. That's what we have left.” That's when he picked up the phone. I'll tell you, it's the funniest thing. He picked up the phone, called J.C. King and said, “As of now Cuba is no longer part of WH Division. You have all the rest of the islands but Cuba is separate reporting to me.” Boom. This is before Harvey comes along. This was well before. So Zog and I find ourselves a task force without calling ourselves a task force. The word Mongoose didn't come along until much later.

MW: What was the impression about IG report at the time? In the trenches? There must have been rumors. What did you know about it?

SH: We didn't see it. All we knew about it was that it was a bad report; that Kirk had taken the knives out and was really murdering Bissell and Jake. Nobody mentioned J.C. J.C. was off on the sidelines as far as everybody was concerned. Everybody in the room was Jake (lost words)... and I don't think Hawkins' name was kicked around much, but Bissell's name sure as hell was, and Tracy Barnes' name was kicked around as the two masterminds, with Jake getting most of the blame because he's the guy doing the work. Theoretically that's what we thought anyway. And remember that I had just gotten back from Saigon when all of this thing hit. The rumors where....sure they were there, but nobody had any facts. All we had was rumors. The rumors mostly came from the WH Division. So you had to sort of figure out whether they were really telling you what the report said, or whether they were making it up or what have you. And everyone knew there was no love loss between Kirk and Bissell in the first place.

BL: Sam, another of the points the IG report makes is that the DDP did not consult with the analysts - especially with regard to Castro's survivability, his popularity, the effectiveness of his security forces, and so on - and they recommended that that become a standard practice before covert actions were implemented in the future. Did you all have a lot of consultation with the DI, or with ONE, through Mongoose?

SH: Oh yes. There was no problem on that. Yes we did. And as a matter of fact we like to think that Sherman Kent's September 1962 estimate, the famous September NIE, when he was sure that the Soviets were not going to put missiles into Cuba, came about as a result of our prodding the DDI side of the house in terms of doing some kind of an estimate because things down there looked pretty strange. We didn't know what the Hell was going on. We said so frankly "We're getting all these crazy reports." Ted and his people were doing a fine job in providing us with all this crazy stuff that's going on in the island, and the OpaLocka - the Caribbean Admissions Center - was doing a fine job with providing us the stuff from all the refugees coming out. Everything looked like there was something screwy going on but we don't know what, literally. I don't know who it was who got a hold of DDI Ray Cline,

to say "how about an estimate of some kind." Ray was the wrong guy because Ray and Sherman didn't see eye to eye on anything. But anyway the word got around, and I think we can take credit for prodding Sherman and his staff to do an estimate on all of these crazy reports that nobody could figure out what the hell's happening.

MW: You mean the many reports from Cubans coming out of Cuba about missiles being seen here or there and everything else.

SH: Yes, there was all kinds of stuff coming out. They were seeing planes when no planes had arrived yet. The reports were confusing to say the least. And somebody, without an ax to grind, like the DDI's supposed to be, had to put it together.

BL: Were there cleared DI officers who knew about Mongoose, who knew why (overlapping sound) going on?

SH: I don't know if we kept a record of that, but obviously the DDI knew; Sherman Kent knew, and I think the Cuban desk officers knew. There were enough. We weren't playing that kind of a game. The Pentagon did. I know that for a fact. The Pentagon really had Mongoose - cleared officers to do things. Colonel Wright, for example (the guy who actually pushed through the report that targeted the U-2), he's the guy who presented the (lost word??). We did it on the grounds that it's in our report and it would look bad if we did it. Nobody listened to us, so we had Colonel Wright do it. He was very happy to do it, and he later took credit for the whole damned thing. He never mentioned CIA in his own biography that he wrote about what he had done. The report came in - he never knew where the report came from - but a report came in! Anyway, no, we kept our DDI counterparts pretty well informed on what the hell, not what we were doing, but in terms of what the U.S. Government was doing, so that everybody was putting their shoulder to the wheel - that kind of thing. We didn't get into the details. We later did, when, after the Cuban Missile Crisis, and Des Fitzgerald took over, Des actually brought down, I forget the guy's name - he was a very, very senior elder statesman of the DDI, and Des went out of channels without so much as a "By your leave to anybody, and a lot of the troops objected, and Des - made available to this gentleman the true identities, plus the source descriptions we used for the assets.

BL: This was a DI person? Milton Brown?

SH: No, it wasn't Milt. I know Milt. No it was somebody else. Gray-haired gentleman. Elderly statesman kind of thing.

MW: But a Cuban expert?

SH: Not really, no. He was just a good analyst and a good estimator. Anyway, Des made available everything, against every single solitary rule or procedure you can imagine. He just brought him down and said "Look, here are all of our sources, true names, ranks, positions, everything. And this is the kind of by-lines we are using for these people. You sit and look at this stuff and see if it's worth disseminating. See if it's worth putting out. We've been putting it out, but tell us. What do you think when you see it? Des did this to avoid this constant nonsense we used to get from the DDI types, which was "You can't tell us the source, so we can't really understand the information without knowing who the source was."

BL: Was it Archer Bush?

SH: No, that doesn't sound right.

MW: When was this; when did this happen?

SH: Right after Des came aboard in early 1963. After the Missile Crisis.

MW: So he wanted a real (cut off)

SH: He wanted a totally honest appraisal from somebody without an ax to grind. If we did it in-house and the Task Force - or the SAS, we were suddenly called - or in Miami, nobody would listen to it. You can't do it that way. And if we did it to the DDI as a whole....There are lots of arguments back and forth between DDI and DDP types, and that wasn't fair. So pick one guy who's an honest fellow - and everyone knows he's honest, he's not going to be swayed one way

or the other - and literally stick him in a room and say, "Here, everything, and tell me what it's like."

MW: The degree of communication between the DDP and DDI on Mongoose is apparently a lot more that it was during the Bay of Pigs Operation.

SH: Oh, much more.

MW: Years ago, when I started amassing the documents that we put together into the Bay of Pigs collection, I wanted to know if there was anything left in the branch over in the DI. So I called up whoever was the Cuban analyst - this would have been, probably, early 1993. I don't remember the analyst's name (I could probably look it up), but he told me - and I don't know if this is true or not. The folklore in the branch was that whoever it was that had been one of the Cuban analysts was called in the Saturday before the invasion because there were all these news stories about Cuban defector pilots having bombed the air field in Havana and then flown to Key West and here they are, they have their planes on the ground and now they are defecting to the United States and this is a big news story. He came in and wrote it up for the current publications at the time and gave it to his editors, and at the last minute somebody came over from the DDP and said "Wait guys, that's a covert action. Those are our planes, those are our pilots, those are B-26's we painted with Cuban markings. This is all a big hoax. You don't need to be reporting this to the President or you're going to look silly." So apparently this has been handed down at the Cuban desk by word of mouth.

SH: It sounds true.

MW: I don't know it that's true or not. You probably know better than I do.

SH: It sounds true. Those things have happened. That's one thing we made sure in Mongoose we didn't do. I can go back to another operation that I was involved in long before we had things like Mongoose and Bays of Pigs and what have you. This is the Indonesian operation in support of the Sumatra colonels in 1957 and 1958. I personally, on my own authority. I never checked with Al Ulmer, who was my Division Chief, or anybody else. I happened to know the DDI/OCI person on

the desk on Indonesia, Jeanette Marr. I knew her from OSS days. I used to call her up and we double-talked and I kept her fully informed of anything that might suddenly appear on the horizon without going into the details of our operation or anything like that. She wrote the President's Daily Brief sections on Indonesia and a guy called Cabell insisted on calling the Sumatran colonels "patriots." Everyone else in the Government called them "rebels."

MW: This was the DDCI?

SH: Cabell, yes. He was known as "Rice and Beans" Cabell. Same guy. He insisted on the PDB using the word patriots. Jeanette hated it. She couldn't do anything about it obviously - Cabell insisted. Look at the old PDB's and you'll see that they have patriots, not rebels. We could double-talk because of patriots and it worked fine. When Mongoose came along there was no question in my mind....at least, I would have done the same thing unless Bill Harvey had said "Don't talk to them," but he never did. Bruce Cheever, who was Bill's deputy, thought you had to bring them in, too, to let them know what's going on. You don't go into details of an operation, you don't go into details of your sources. The only guy that ever did that was Des. That was 1963. His final report to Des was simply, "You guys are shooting yourselves in the foot. This information is very good, not just good but very good and you are masking it all with all these crazy by-lines. I know you can't give the true name but you can at least change the by-line somehow." This is what Des used later when he became DDP for a couple of years, to change all the by-line systems throughout the whole DDP. We started to give better descriptions of the sources. Some of these things had some benefits. But coming back to this crazy report, let me come back a second....

BL: The IG report....

SH: In the IG report, the thing that bothered me, too, in there, in reading the IG report was the fact that so many of the case officers - if it's correct - seemed to be confused as to just what the hell they were doing and why they were doing what they were doing. I don't think we ever had that in the Mongoose show. We had Ed Marelius up here in Washington as the Chief of the FI Branch. We had Seymour Bolten as head of the Covert Action Branch, PP, Psychological Warfare Branch. We

had Art Maloney as head of the PM Branch. Hal Swensen as head of the CI Branch. These were all very senior guys who were well regarded by everyone, and they were honest as the day is long, and they wouldn't take any horseshit from anybody, and ran a very tight ship. So the case officers here at this end, and we had case officers working against Cuban targets in from Washington, but they never ran across the Cuban case officers that Ted was running down in Miami. They each knew their fields. They each worked with each other. They kept each other informed so they didn't cross each others trails. That's something I think we did, I think from second nature, but it would have been nice to know, in that, from that report, that we were at least not doing something that we were wrong in doing, or doing something that we shouldn't have done. That report makes it clear that we did just the right thing. That everybody knew what the hell their piece was. I don't know if that's correct. The DDP's rebuttal doesn't really face that particular question about the case officers and where they looked for their guidance. It kind of sloughs it off more or less. To me it made no sense for, as I say, for the three senior guys in the Mongoose thing not to have seen that report so that they could be sure that they weren't making some of the same mistakes. McCone, I know, and Cabell, were trying to hide the whole thing. Within limits I agree with them, but not....You don't have to put it on the bulletin board like they've done now. It's on the internet.

SH: (Conversation in progress).....poisonous pesticide and it was available in any hardware store you wanted to go to or Sears or what have you, and it was available in Havana or other parts of Cuba. It was done all over the world and the little bottles that it used to come in actually had a skull and crossbones, the old symbol for poison. The idea was the needle would be so fine that it would be just like a little tiny scratch and if AMLASH would get close enough to Fidel to use that to scratch him and at the same time have the Black Leaf 40 enter the bloodstream. How much you have to put in, or what have you, I never found out. Never asked. Manny Gunn gave all the technical details to Nestor Sanchez to pass on to AMLASH. When Nestor offered the ball-point pen to AMLASH he looked at it very disdainfully, and he said when Nestor tried to explain about the Black Leaf 40, AMLASH, who was a medical doctor in his own right, said "I know all about that. You don't have to tell me all about that." He said, "Come on, you fellows can come up with something better than that." And as far as I know he never took the pen. Although if he had been a double agent I think he would have

taken the pen to use at some kind of public trial, so he could show the evidence that the United States was behind it. The fact that he never took the pen, to me, is pretty good evidence that he was not a double agent. I don't think to this day that he ever was. In addition to that particular one thing that I know I was involved with Nestor, on and with Manny Gunn. The one thing that I don't know enough about is when we had to assign an officer to Bobby Kennedy, to be used by Bobby Kennedy to make contact with Mafia types in this country and in Canada. That Bobby Kennedy would pick and set the appointment time and place and our case officer would then go and meet whoever this person was and come back and report to Bobby Kennedy. The theory behind this apparently was that Bobby had some bright idea that the Mafia must have left some kind of stay-behind network in Cuba because of all of their interests that they had in Cuba when Fidel came in: prostitution, gambling, drug running and whatever else was involved. He said they must have had a good stay-behind network and we could get some decent information to what's going on. Well just to give you the QED of this, we never got any information that was worth disseminating. I never saw any information at all from it. The case officer I picked....Apparently the way the request came was from Bobby to General Marshall Carter, who was then DDCI, to Bill Harvey, Bill Harvey to me, to pick a case officer to assign to Bobby. I sat with Bruce Cheever and then, of course, with Bill himself and we decided on a guy named Charles Ford, Charley Ford. Charley was a huge man. Very stocky, make a very good lineman on any football team, and he know how to handle himself in any kind of problem. We figured he was the best kind of guy. Charley and I sat and we figured out he's got to have some kind of name to use - we can't use Charley Ford. But Charley also had some handkerchiefs and some shirts with CF on it, and rather than risk an exposure of some kind, Charley and I sat in my office, the ground floor of the building, and we said "How about Charley Rocky Fiscalini." And ever since then, I always called Charley, til he died, "Rocky." We came up with Fiscalini. There are two different ways of spelling it. I spelled it FISCALINI and Angie Novella, Bobby Kennedy's secretary, spelled it on her appointment log, FISCOLLINI, which is probably more ethnic than mine. But anyway, Fiscalini is the way you pronounce it. So Charley went off and he made several trips in the United States, and I know he made at least one if not more in Canada - I think it was Toronto. All at the behest of Bobby. Either Bobby himself would talk to Charley on the phone, or Angie Novella would call Charley on what we euphemistically called a secure phone - nothing more than an outside line that we had

in the front office of Task Force W - it was a big bullpen where we had four or five secretaries. Bill Harvey's office here [motions with his hands]. Bruce Cheever's office here. Mine over here, and the secretaries out in what we called the bullpen. There was a big section in here where we had a bunch of special assistants, and Charley Ford was one of those who sat in here. There were about four or five guys in there doing all kinds of different things. Charley never, as far as I know, never spoke. I know he never spoke to me about who he saw - what they talked about - and I never never saw any intelligence information to disseminate, and as far as I know Charley never had any intelligence information to disseminate. To us it was a waste of time and effort, plus we were putting a man in real danger, since, from pure tradecraft point of view we wanted to control, the meeting time and the meeting place. We wanted to set it up, and we don't want to walk into a hornet's nest without knowing who or what we're seeing. I have mentioned this to several people, without mentioning Charley Ford's name until recently, and I'll tell you why in a minute. I mentioned it to Scott Breckenridge, and Scott mentioned it in his last book that he put out. I mentioned it to a fellow by the name of Goldfarb, who was an attorney on Kennedy's staff at the Justice Department, and Goldfarb wrote a book in which he quotes me on this, and then he also says he doesn't believe me and he doesn't know why I'm making these kinds of stories up.

MW: He's defending Bobby Kennedy.

SH: Oh, absolutely, no question about that. I mentioned it to other people along the way and I even mentioned it to Seymour Hersh when he was putting his book together "The Dark Side of Camelot." If you look at, I forget what page it is, there's a footnote there. Sy was the one who found, in doing his researches, he found, as a result of the Kennedy Assassination Records Review Board, and all the documents that were produced as a result of that, Angie Novella, in her log - her appointment and telephone log for 1962 - puts down General Carter, Charles Ford (Fiscalini), for a date, for a meeting with Bobby Kennedy. I've got documentary proof now. I'd like to shove it under Goldfarb's nose, but anyway....Hersh puts that as a footnote in his book in which he says until he, Hersh, was able to show me the log. I had always refused to mention the name of the individual who was the case officer. The fact that Kennedy was involved in trying to work with the Mafia at the same time....He, Goldfarb, couldn't believe that Kennedy would be working with the Mafia at the same

time he's trying to send them to jail. "He's your boss" I would say to Goldfarb, "he wasn't my boss, I can't figure him out any better than you can." Now I'm told by Chuck Briggs that in the pile of paper that he's looking at now - as a result of the AARB nonsense - they have found two memorandums from the Church Committee - the Schwieker subcommittee of the Church Committee. I had forgotten that I had testified before the Schwieker Subcommittee. Chuck now tells me that not only did I testify - and he's looking at my transcript of my testimony - but he also has Charley Ford's testimony. Where Charley....I don't know what he says - Chuck hasn't shown it to me - but he says "That is there, it's in great detail, it's longer than yours, so obviously Charley must have told the Schwieker committee what I'm telling you now." That he actually was assigned to Bobby and did what Bobby had asked him to do. Which is to go meet Mafia types. What they said, unless Charley says in his testimony - and all this is under oath - I don't know what Charley said, but you guys go ahead and look at it. I haven't got the clearances yet until it's declassified. Can't even look at my own testimony. Oddly enough, I told this to Chuck when he called me and gave me the date. I looked at my old calendars - I keep all my old calendars. I never had any calendar that I kept while I was working but ever since I left the job, over 20 years ago, I've been keeping good records on my calendar. Anyway, there it is, April something, 1976. Written right in the little box, Schwieker Subcommittee. I called Chuck back and I said, "you're right, I did testify." People have said that, as a result of this, that Charley and Bobby must have been working on using the Mafia in some kind of assassination plots. Check what Charley says in his testimony; I don't know what they did. They never said. Charley never talked to me about that. He would always stick his head in before he left on another trip, "I'm off again, Sam. Bye." The reason I know he went to Canada - I think it was Toronto - was because he came in for the first time and said, "I'm leaving the country." I said "Where the Hell are you going?" He says "Canada." Charley was a damn fine officer, and I'm awfully sorry he died so early.

In terms of talking about assassination plotting, it gets kind of hairy after a while. It's hard to know when to stop, and you don't even know when you start something. I remember under Des; when Des came in on that Monday morning for example, on this crazy business of the sea shallots had been all over everywhere....Again it was a Monday morning and he had just come in from driving his VW with his foot through

the floorboards. When he got on those highways he was murder. This is what always made me think somewhere during those weekends he must have seen Bobby, because he came in all charged up. I asked him over and over again, not just once but several times, where the heck is this pressure coming from? I don't see it myself except through you. He said "It's coming from high places." He never said Bobby. It's coming from outside the agency, and Des is an honest guy, I can't say he's making this up. Why would he be doing that? So I have to assume he's getting it from somebody who's got the authority to tell him, without going through the chain of command. It's a surmise on my part; I can't prove it.

BL: Who up the chain of command knew about Charley and Bobby?

SH: Carter. Marshall Carter, the DDCI.

BL: And that was all?

SH: As far as I know. Helms never knew. I know that much.

MW: Fitzgerald?

SH: No. It was all over by then. Charley's activities stopped after the Missile Crisis.

MW: Ok, ok. Fitzgerald didn't come in until 1963.

SH: January 1963.

MW: McCone?

SH: Unless Carter told him.

MW: Why would Carter be in the loop and not McCone?

SH: I don't know. I'm looking at Angie Novella's logs, that's the only way I know Carter's in the loop. It says Carter, right there.

MW: You sure it's our Carter?

SH: Yes, Marshall Carter. Take a look at the page. I've got a copy of the page at home, I should have brought it.

MW: Send us a fax.

SH: All right, I'll dig it up. You may have to remind me again. I got it through the courtesy of Sy Hersh. It is now available as a public document. When I saw that, as a matter of fact I hadn't yet gotten it....Sy once called me when he was still doing his research on the book, and we had talked about a guy working for Bobby, and he kept on asking me, who? who? who? I said "Not me, I'm not going to tell you the name." He called me on the phone one morning and he said, "How does Fiscalini strike you?" I said, "where in the goddamned hell did you ever get that name?" He told me. He said "It's from Angie Novella's appointment logs." I said run that by me again, slowly. Well because it's got Ford and Fiscalini but it could be Ford. He gave me Fiscalini. There were only two guys in the world that I knew of that had that name. We never told Harvey, we never told Bruce Cheever. Didn't need to. Theoretically we were professionals.

MW: You just had it because you had to clear it. You basically had to sign his vouchers and make sure his travel was getting paid for and everything.

SH: That's all we did. If you've got the finance records you can find out where he went and every time he went, but if I know Charley he probably fixed it up in such a way. I'm trying to remember the vouchers. He fixed it up in such a way that that didn't really show. He wouldn't ask for stuff. When Sy said "Fiscalini", I said "You got me hands down." I said "It's the only time I ever lied to you." It was true. It was the only time I ever held anything back. When I start talking I know my limits.

BL: Did you lie to him or you just didn't tell him?

SH: I hadn't told him. I must have never told him the name. He's got a note to that effect; a footnote on that same page where he talks about this operation in the book. If you've got the book around I'll show you. In terms of assassination plots, first of all they're few and far between. In terms of getting involved in one of these things. Being in the business we were in, with the old rules and regulations that we had - and we didn't have to worry about a Senate Intelligence Committee and a House Intelligence Committee - we did lots of things just by feel, by gosh and by golly. As Larry Houston told me when the Church committee started to expose lots of things, Larry said, "Sam, I told you. You should have talked to me about a lot of these things. We wouldn't be here today." I said, "Yeah, Larry, and you know why we didn't talk to you in those days? Because you would have stopped a lot of us from doing things." He says, "Very right." That's the way life was, and I'm sure that there are other officers.... I'm just one of many who were involved in different parts of the world, doing a whole variety of things, with almost no way to pin down somebody saying, "I authorized X, Y, or Z." That goes even for State intelligence collection, because some of the intelligence collection was done by some screwball ideas.

BL: Sam, you've just talked about Bobby Kennedy and CIA and Mafia assassination plotting against Castro. Many scholars have concluded, though on just circumstantial evidence, that Jack Kennedy was also fully witting, if not involved in assassination plotting against Castro. Do you have a view about that?

SH: Yes, I agree with the people who say the same thing because I can't imagine Bobby on his own without telling Brother Jack some of the things he's done, and including probably Jack being the inspiration for some of the things that Bobby finally did. I think they were so close together. There's a new book out, it's not new anymore this is now 1998, this came out in the Fall of 1997 - it's *Robert Kennedy: Brother Protector*. You got it?

MW: No.

SH: The author is a fellow by the name of Hilty. University of Tennessee Press. It's got some of the weirdest stuff in it that you can think of. I only read the parts that I know something about, namely

Mongoose and its antecedent follow-on. He's got so many mistakes in there it's not even funny. On the first 24 pages there are 19 errors. Most of them serious ones. Including calling AMLASH a double agent. He doesn't know the language; he doesn't know what he's talking about. AMLASH was never a double agent by anybody's stretch of the imagination. A lot of other stuff, but even he says he's partially protecting the Kennedy image as well as everybody else. Even he says in there the same thing, that based on his researches there's no question that what one knew the other knew. They always worked in tandem on all subjects. The problem that Goldfarb had, for example - because he was one of the Lawyers attacking the Mafia, trying to put them in jail - and he just couldn't....He was sitting in my living room and he just couldn't understand, and he kept on saying, "how could Bobby tell me to put the Mafia in jail when he's working with them?" I said, "I don't know how he could do that. You worked for him, you tell me." But he did. I couldn't prove it then, but if you guys ever release those Charley Ford memo's and my memo, at least we've got two statements done under oath before the Senate Intelligence Committee, or the Church Committee really, where at least it's being discussed. I don't see how anybody, on any of this stuff, particularly after the Bay of Pigs Operation, dealing with the Agency, I don't think anything was said or done between the two guys that the other one didn't know. They had to. Bobby may have stayed away from the Agency up before the Bay of Pigs, but after the Bay of Pigs he was always Johnny at the rathole on everything. Didn't understand what he was doing either, in many cases.

BL: Sam, is there anything else before we adjourn?

SH: I don't know. You guys ask and I'll try and answer.

MW: I've exhausted my....I've fired my shots.

SH: I still like reading those two reports, and I agree completely, by the way, between the Kirkpatrick report and the Bissell rebuttal. I think McCone was right to say that the truth is somewhere in-between. I honestly think if I had been a case officer, or been involved like Jake was, if the President said "Don't go to Trinidad find some stupid place to go," I would have, really, I would have said "Not me sir, find somebody else to do it." That's number one, and that's an important one. Because for example, I'm the guy who

told General Carter to tell somebody, and I didn't know who the hell it was, he was not supposed to tell until I found out later, it was Ike, Eisenhower, in our Sumatra operation... We were involved in all kinds of crazy nonsense, including air, by the way. Cabell didn't get involved in that, thank the Lord. It was Civil Air Transport planes we were using. A suggestion came to me, through Cabel's office, to me, about something going to be done, I forget exactly what it was, but something ought to be done in the field to make things easier for the rebels. I'll call them rebels. It made no sense at all. Actually had no relation to reality in the field. I didn't even bother checking with anybody, I just decided on my own. It won't work, it doesn't make any sense and the people out there will think we are crazy. Cabell said, it finally got to Cabell talking to me, "Ok Sam, whatever you say is fine." I find out later that the suggestion came not from Cabell but from Ike, through Gordon Gray, who was then the National Security Council guy, through the Agency and down to me. I was the Exec. Why they didn't call Al Ulmer I don't know - maybe he wasn't there - but anyway I get the draft. If they had said the President wants you to do such and such I might have given him a different answer. Ike's got a good military background, better than mine, for God's sakes. That's the one nice thing I liked about this Agency, and always have. I hope it's around, you can really speak your mind.

MW: Sometimes.

SH: Well, all right. Things may have changed. I've been out 20 years, but in my day we screamed bloody murder and we screamed bloody murder about Mongoose. We screamed bloody murder about other things, believe me, over the years, and when it didn't make sense we said so. So help me, Trinidad and then the cutting 80% of the air support, I don't know if Bissell really understood the meaning. He may have thought that by the time they would land Castro would be dead. That's fine, but if you're running a vest pocket operation like that, you had better be sure, and you don't take the chance with 1,500 men or 1,400 men whatever hit the beaches. Bissell was no kind of a guy to - let alone Tracy Barnes - to be involved in assassination plotting. They didn't know what the hell they were doing. Tracy wouldn't know. The record is clear, and it's even in the Church Committee report, for Christ's sake, that a message came from headquarters to the Havana station, when it was still there, talking about assassination. The very next morning, when someone saw

the confirmation copy, a flash went out saying "Ignore the message." Who the hell wrote the message, Tracy. I mean that is the silliest thing I've ever seen. The last thing in the world you want on paper. Just like when Lansdale talked about elimination of leaders in the August 10, 1962 meeting of the Special Group (Augmented). Puts it in writing and Harvey goes through the roof. It's all out there now, but that's the kind of people who don't know what the hell it's all about. They never tried.

BL: Sam, thanks so much. We appreciate you coming in.